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EAID
SUBJECT: TFHA01: EMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE EARTHQUAKE SITREP as of 1800,
Day 8

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Port-au-Prince experienced an aftershock measuring 6.1 this morning, causing some concern but no reported damage. Destruction and deaths in Cite Soleil from last week's earthquake were relatively low, owing to the simple, low, makeshift housing. The turnout of police officers at the Cite Soleil police station is relatively high, compared to other stations. Embassy staff is working to help Telco re-establish landline telephone service. President Preval addressed the public via radio, complaining of the difficulties in coordinating aid, and stating that "Haiti will stand up again!" The shipping company transporting aid to Port-au-Prince for the USG reported traffic jams on the land route connecting Port-au-Prince and the Dominican Republic, causing significant delays. Incidents of looting and violence remain isolated. End summary.

HAITI AWAKENS TO AN AFTERSHOCK MEASURING 6.1

¶1. (SBU) Residents of Port-au-Prince who thought the worst was over were alarmed by a significant jolt at approximately 6:00 AM this morning, the largest aftershock since the January 12 quake. Though causing some panic and concern, there were no reports of major damage in Port-au-Prince. However, the Embassy received a credible though unconfirmed report of the collapse of a multi-level school in Milot, south of Cap Haitien. We understand that a Portuguese journalist in Port-au-Prince was seriously injured in the aftershock.

WHEN POVERTY CAN BE AN ADVANTAGE

¶2. (SBU) Polcouns visited Cite Soleil, where he observed relatively little damage. The local police chief reported that approximately 3,000 residents of the area died in the earthquake, of an estimated 300,000 population - a low fatality rate compared to other densely populated neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince. We credit the relatively low number of deaths to the lack of large concrete block buildings and the predominance of low makeshift shelters that better absorbed the shock. Unfortunately, the only public school in Cite Soleil, a concrete block building, did not survive the quake.

¶3. (SBU) According to PNH officials, the violence in the community is not more than it was before the quake. The police station presently has 50 out of 67 men on duty (which is significantly above the 40 percent rate of staffing reported by other Port-au-Prince police stations). The distribution of food

that normally takes place in Cite Soleil was interrupted with the quake and police fear that if food and water do not get to the residents relatively quickly, they might see more aggression in coming days. In addition, the police fear that many of the escaped prisoners may hook up with the existing criminals in the area to form gangs which could become dangerous. The U.S. military is planning to begin food and water distribution in the community shortly.

EMBASSY STAFF WORKING WITH TELCO TO RE-ESTABLISH LANDLINE PHONE SERVICE

14. (SBU) The Embassy's IPC office is helping to re-establish landline telephone service in Port-au-Prince and particularly to the Embassy. IPC telephone technicians have been working with Telco and a group of military telephone technicians for the past three days to reconnect lines at Telco's distribution points in Petionville and Pacot.

PREVAL ADDRESSES THE PUBLIC

15. (SBU) In a statement broadcast on Port-au-Prince radio, President Preval complained that "Aid is arriving and we are not prepared to receive it. When it arrives, they tell us 'Where are the trucks for transportation, where are the warehouses?' The aid is accumulating in a backlog. It is the coordination of aid, knowing what quantities, when and how to distribute it that is important." In addition, in a French radio interview, Preval stated "A people and a country do not die. In the past two years we have gone through two historical catastrophes - four hurricanes (in one year) and an earthquake (in the next year). Yes, we will stand up again!"

PRIVATE SECTOR REQUESTS U.S. SECURITY IN ORDER TO GET BACK TO BUSINESS

16. (SBU) Representatives of Haiti's private sector met with the Ambassador Merten on January 19 to thank the U.S. for its relief efforts. They stated that "Now, it is time to get back to business." Their major concern is security at all levels, to include security of goods, at marketplaces, and for ports of entry (i.e., the seaports, the airport, and the road between Port-au-Prince and the Dominican Republic). They also raised the issue of financial security - that is, preventing the collapse of Haiti's banking system given the large amount of expected bankruptcies and delinquent debts. According to Richard Coles, representing a major Haitian business conglomerate, "If we can have security, within three months we will be operational with 80,000 jobs back on the market." Bernard Fils-Aime, representing wireless provider Comcel/Voila, raised the issue of misperceptions among the general Haitian population, who expect the U.S. military to take over the role of MINUSTAH and to provide relief and security. Regarding the role of Haitian leadership in recovery and rebuilding, Bernard Craan said, "The massive presence of the international community should not be devoid of Haitian participation. We [Haiti] must not be taken charge of; we must take charge." The Ambassador reiterated that the USG is trying to work with and build up the Haitian state as a partner and encouraged the group to focus on how to work together more efficiently.

TRAFFIC JAMS PLAGUE AID EN ROUTE BY LAND FROM THE DR

17. (SBU) Poloff received a call from the manager of the shipping company that is transporting aid supplies for the U.S. military via land from the Dominican Republic. The manager stated that 40-foot containers presently en route to Port-au-Prince are being delayed by traffic jams in three chokepoints: At Malpasse (on the Haiti-DR border); at Croix des Bouquets (approximately seven miles east of Port-au-Prince); and at the intersection of the

highway from the DR and Rue 15th October (about one mile west of the U.S. Embassy). According to the manager, the shipper's truck drivers are reporting 5-hour delays at each chokepoint.

18. INCIDENTS OF LOOTING AND VIOLENCE REMAIN ISOLATED

19. (SBU) According to the Embassy RSO, reports of looting and violence remain isolated, and are occurring mainly in the downtown area. Incidents are caused primarily by roving armed gangs. In residential areas, occasional gunshots are being heard, primarily by armed property owners scaring off potential looters.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

MERTEN